

Eris, goddess of Discord, was the only divinity not invited to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. Out of anger, she threw a golden apple ~~to~~ marked "For the Fairest" into the banquet hall. All the goddesses wanted it, but eventually the field was narrowed to Aphrodite, Hera, and Pallas Athena. They asked Zeus to judge between them, but he refused, and suggested a mortal, Paris.

The three goddesses appeared before ~~Paris~~ Paris, and each attempted to bribe him. Hera promised to make him Lord of Europe and Asia; Athena, that he would lead the Trojans to victory against the Greeks; Aphrodite, that the fairest woman in the world would be his. He gave Aphrodite the golden apple, thus assuring Aphrodite's support of, and Hera's and Athena's opposition to, the Trojans.

Helen was the fairest woman in the world--so fair that all the Greek princes wanted to marry her, and her stepfather feared the one who did marry her would be murdered by the others. So, he made them all pledge to support Helen's husband, no ~~matter~~ matter who was chosen, if he was wronged due to the marriage. After all had sworn the oath--this being the only way they could be chosen--the stepfather chose Menelaus, and made him King of Sparta.

Paris left Oenone, the nymph with whom he was living, and was led by Aphrodite to Sparta, where Menelaus took him in as guest. Menelaus left for Crete on business, and Paris seduced Helen and returned to Troy with her. When Menelaus discovered what had happened, he called on the other princes to help him, as they were bound to do.

The Greek forces gathered at Aulis, but found the winds and tides such that they could not sail. Calchas, the Greek soothsayer, announced that Artemis was angry with the troops for having killed certain animals sacred to her, and that she demanded a sacrifice in return: the Greek leader, Agamemnon, must sacrifice his eldest daughter, Iphigenia. Agamemnon sent to his wife, Clytaemnestra, saying he had arranged for Iphigenia to marry Achilles. Clytaemnestra sent Iphigenia to Aulis, where Agamemnon took her to the altar, and she was killed. (After the war, Clytaemnestra murdered her husband because of this.)

After the sacrifice, the Greeks were able to sail to the area near Troy and begin the battle. For nine years, the tide wavered from one side to the other. Then, Achilles and Agamemnon quarreled. To remove the anger of Apollo, Agamemnon was being pressured to give Chryseis, a priest's daughter he had taken as plunder from a previous battle, back to her father. He agreed to do so only if ~~he~~ he could take from Achilles a maiden named Briseis, whom Achilles had gotten as plunder from a previous battle. At Athena's urging, Achilles accepted this--but refused to fight on the Greek side any more, because of his anger.

Achilles also called on his mother, Thetis, daughter of Zeus, to appeal to Zeus to cause the Trojans to do so well the Greeks would beg Achilles to come back. She did so, and Zeus reluctantly agreed to do so.

Zeus sent a lying dream to Agamemnon, promising him victory if he attacked. So the next day, the Greeks attacked full force--but in midst of battle, both sides hit on a common-sense solution: Let Menelaus and Paris fight each other, with Helen going to the winner.

Each man threw his spear, and failed to wound the other. Then Menelaus seized Paris barehanded and dragged him by his helmet's crest toward the Greek lines. He would have completed the capture, but Aphrodite caused Paris's helmet crest to snap, and wrapped Paris in a cloud and took him back to Troy. Menelaus angrily searched the Trojans' ranks for Paris, and the Trojans helped, but he could not find him. Agamemnon declared Menelaus the winner, and demanded Helen. The Trojans were about to agree when Athena and Hera persuaded a Trojan named Pandarus to fire an arrow at Menelaus. Menelaus was only slightly wounded, but the Greeks were so angered that the battle began again.

Led by Ajax and Diomedes (with Achilles gone), the Greeks were winning over the Trojans, led by Hector and Aeneas. Diomedes was so brave and powerful he once attacked Aphrodite, and drove her away, when she tried to help Aeneas. When Diomedes encountered Hector, he found Ares (god of war) helping Hector. The Greeks began to fall back, until Hera and Athena came down to help Diomedes, who wounded Ares with a spear. Ares, too, retreated from the battlefield.

With Troy in danger, Hector returned to the city, where he urged his mother to pray for the city's safety to Athena. (She did so, but Athena denied the prayer.) Then, Hector saw his wife and child again, perhaps for the last time, after which he returned to battle, along with Paris.

At this point, Zeus forbade all other immortals to take part, and personally went to the battlefield to help the Trojans—it was time to fulfill the promise to Thetis. Led by Hector, the Trojans routed the Greeks, chasing them back near their ships, where they built a moat in self-defense.

Agamemnon sent a delegation to Achilles, relaying Agamemnon's apologies and an offer of many gifts, including Briseis, if Achilles would return to battle. Although this was what he had originally asked his mother to arrange, Achilles now turned down Agamemnon's offer.

The Trojans were again winning the next day, when Hera intervened. She used every art she knew to make herself beautiful, including borrowing a magic girdle from Aphrodite, giving the wearer added charms. She then went to Zeus, seduced him, and put him to sleep. Then, she urged Poseidon to turn the tide of battle in favor of the Greeks.

At this point Ajax hurled Hector to the ground, wounding and nearly killing him. The Greeks drove the Trojans away from the ships. But Zeus awoke, and again turned the tide in favor of the Trojans. Apollo revived Hector, and breathed power into him. Hector then led the Trojans in driving the Greeks back to the ships; it appeared the Trojans would succeed in setting fire to the ships.

Patroclus begged Achilles to return to the fighting, and when Achilles refused, Patroclus asked to borrow Achilles's armor, hoping the disguise would convince the Trojans Achilles had rejoined the battle, and force them to fall back. Achilles agreed, and Patroclus led the Myrmidons into battle, wearing Achilles' armor as he did so. He fought almost as well as Achilles himself would have, and fooled the Trojans, who fell back. But when the Trojans again turned things in their favor, Patroclus attempted the one action Achilles told him to avoid—he fought Hector, who was still being helped by Apollo. Hector killed him, stripped him of his armor, and very nearly captured his body.

When Achilles learned of his friend's death, he vowed to return to battle to avenge it. Thetis had Hephaistos make Achilles a new, marvellous set of armor, and Achilles and Agamemnon agreed to end their quarrel. The next day, the Greeks, led by Achilles, slowly forced the Trojans back, until finally all the Trojans except Hector took refuge behind the city gate. Hector stayed outside the gate and met Achilles in one-to-one combat. With considerable help from Athena, Achilles killed Hector, within sight of his father, brothers and sisters.

Word reached the Trojans that Achilles was mistreating Hector's body. At last the gods themselves disapproved of what Achilles was doing, and sent a messenger to Priam, King of Troy, telling him to travel into the Greek camp and offer Achilles a reward to Hector's body. They also sent a messenger to Achilles, telling him to accept the reward and to leave Priam unharmed. Moved by Priam's grief when Priam arrived, Achilles agreed to keep the Greek army in camp for eleven days, to allow the Trojans to bury Hector with full honors. So, the body finally received a proper burial.

Prince Memnon of Ethiopia joined the Trojan forces, bringing a large army with him. Thus, for a time, the Greeks again suffered defeats. But Achilles finally killed Memnon, and once again the Greeks began winning. But then, when Achilles had chased the Trojans to the gates of their city, Paris shot an arrow at Achilles and Apollo guided it. It hit Achilles in the heel, the one spot where Achilles was vulnerable. He died, and Ajax carried his body back to camp while Odysseus held back the Trojans. He was burned in a funeral pyre, and his ashes were placed in the same urn with those of Patroclus.

The Greeks agreed to give Achilles's marvellous armor to either Ajax or Odysseus, whichever received the most votes from among them. Agamemnon and Menelaus turned the vote in favor of their friend Odysseus, and Ajax felt humiliated, and got up one night intending to kill Agamemnon and Menelaus.

However, Athena caused him to go mad, and to mistake sheep and cattle for the army, and he killed them all. When he came to his senses, he felt even more humiliated, and committed suicide. Because the death was by suicide, the Greek did not give him full funeral rites.

The Greeks, shaken by the loss of Achilles and Ajax, consulted a prophet, who told them Troy would not fall until someone fought the Trojans with the bow and arrows of Hercules. These were now owned by Prince Philoctetes, who had originally tried to come to Troy to fight for the Greeks, but had been wounded by a serpent. The wound would not heal, the Greeks couldn't take him to Troy as he was, so they left him on an uninhabited island, Lemnos, to fend for himself. The Greeks felt that after this treatment, Philoctetes would never fight for them; so they sent a delegation, headed by Odysseus, to steal the bow and arrows and return with them. They succeeded in stealing the bow and arrows, but could not bring themselves to let the man starve on the island without them. Finally shown the kindness of Odysseus's relenting, Philoctetes agreed to come to Troy now. A Greek physician healed him, and he went into battle. The first person he ~~wounded~~ wounded was Paris. Paris begged to be taken to Oenone, the nymph he had lived with before he ran off with Helen. Oenone knew of a magic drug to cure a wound; he was taken to her, but she refused to help him, bitter over her previous treatment. She watched him die, then went off and committed suicide.

Troy still did not fall. The Greeks learned there was a sacred image of Athena in Troy, and that as long as the Trojans had it they could not be taken. Diomedes, aided by Odysseus, climbed the Trojan wall at night, found the image and carried it off. Finally, Troy was ready to fall—if the Greeks could come up with the right strategy. They knew they had to find some way to get troops within the walls.

Odysseus came up with the plan to build a huge wooden horse, put the best men inside it, and have the others strike camp and seem to sail away. In reality, these men were to wait behind the nearest island. If the Trojans discovered the plot, the men in the boats would get away safely, but the men in the horse would be doomed. Those chosen to go inside the horse went with great reluctance (except Neoptolemus, Achilles's son), but they finally agreed. Odysseus also arranged for one Greek named Sinon to stay in the deserted camp, with a tale to make the Trojans accept the horse.

One morning, the Trojans awoke to find the Greek camp deserted, and a huge wooden horse outside their gates. They went out to inspect it, uncertain what to do. Finally, they assumed the Greeks had given up, and they exultantly went to inspect the Greek camp. There, they found Sinon, and they dragged him to Priam. In tears, Sinon asked to be made a Trojan. He claimed Athena had been angered by Diomedes' theft of her image, and that the Greeks had given up on the war, but could not get home unless Athena was appeased. Sinon claimed an oracle had told them they must sacrifice a soldier, and that he had been chosen. However, he claimed to have escaped during the night, and claimed he was now left behind. He also stated that the horse had been created as a tribute to Athena, to quell her anger, and that it had been made so huge in order to discourage the Trojans from taking it into their city. Sinon said, as Odysseus had told him to, that the Greeks hoped the Trojans would destroy the horse in their suspicions, thus causing Athena to become angry at them.

The Trojans believed the story, and accepted Sinon as one of their own. Laocoon, a priest, along with his two sons warned the Trojans, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts," and urged them to destroy the horse. But Poseidon, the god most set against the Trojans, arranged to have two huge sea serpents come onto land, take Laocoon and his sons in their coils, and disappear with them into Athena's temple. The Trojans took this as a sign of the folly of mistreating the horse, and although Cassandra also warned them against taking the horse, they took it to the temple of Athena, at the heart of Troy. Then, rejoicing, they went home and celebrated, mostly by getting drunk.

The Greeks got out of the horse at night, set fire to buildings throughout the city, opened the gates for their comrades on the ships, and generally plundered the city. Priam was killed, as was Hector's son Astyanax, as were all the Trojan chiefs except Achilles. Helen was returned to Menelaus. Troy was a